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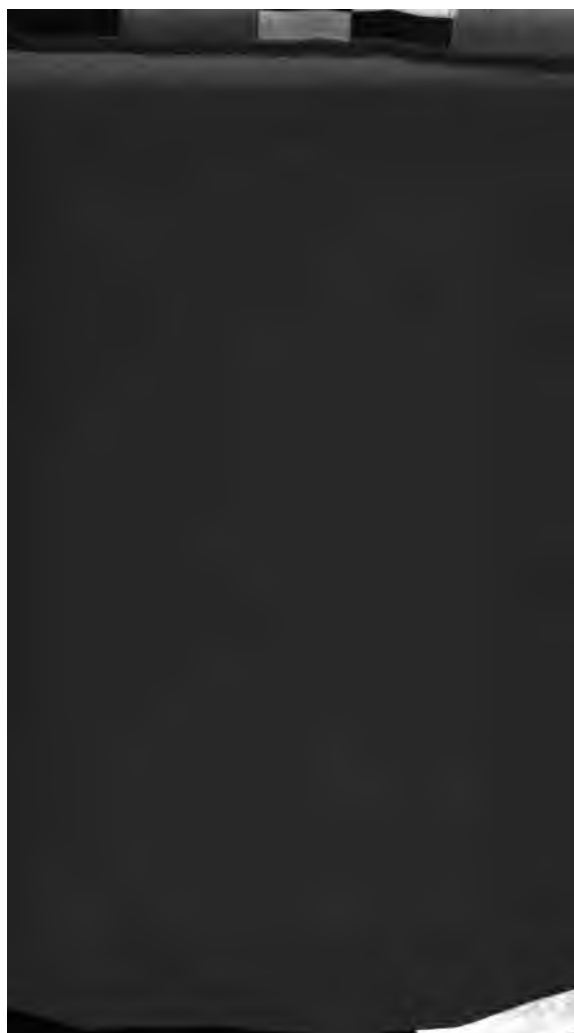
BLESSED MARGARET MARY ALACOQUE



REV. CHARLES B. GARSIDE, M.A



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BLESSED MARGARET MARY ALACOQUE.

A brief Account of her Life.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

A SELECTION FROM HER SAYINGS, AND THE DECREE
OF HER BEATIFICATION.

BY THE

REV. CHARLES B. GARSIDE, M.A.

AUTHOR OF 'THE PROPHET OF CARMEL,' 'DISCOURSES ON SOME
PARABLES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT,' AND 'THE
HELPER OF THE HOLY SOULS.'

'I shall die happy now that the Heart of my Saviour
begins to be known.' B. MARGARET MARY ALACOQUE.



LONDON: BURNS AND OATES,

Portman Street and Paternoster Row.

1874.

210. m. 536

Nihil obstat.

JOSEPH CANONICUS BAI
Censor Deputatus

Imprimatur.

✠ HENRICUS EDUARDUS,
Archiep. Westm.

Die 25 Maii 1874.

PREFACE.

THE following account of the Life of Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque, originally written for the *Monthly Magazine of the Holy Rosary*, has been enlarged by much additional matter.

The Author takes this opportunity of expressing how much he is indebted to the excellent *Life of Blessed Margaret Mary*, by the Rev. G. Tickell, S.J., from which source he has chiefly drawn his materials. Those who desire a full and accurate biography are referred to the above work, and also to the *Life* by Bishop Languet, formerly published in the valuable Oratorian Series of the Modern Saints. The latter contains several interesting letters of B. Margaret Mary to various correspondents, from which some of the Sayings of the Saint forming the fourth chapter of the present compendious account have been taken.

The chapters explanatory of such theological terms as 'Venerable,' 'Heroic Virtue,' 'Affirmation of Miracles,' and 'Beatification' have been added for the benefit of those readers who have not the means of consulting works that treat of these subjects.

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BLESSED MARGARET MARY ALACOQUE.

CHAPTER I.

BLESSED MARGARET MARY'S EARLY LIFE—HER ENTRANCE INTO RELIGION.

'THE path of the just,' writes Solomon, 'as a shining light, goeth forwards, and increaseth even to perfect day' (Prov. iv. 18). This is one of those deep sayings that admit of many interpretations; as you turn it round in different directions it gives out, like the diamond, manifold streams of radiance. If it is true that during the life of a holy person the interior illumination and resplendent beauty of grace grow and unfold themselves progressively within the soul, it is also true, in another sense, that the very external world itself is irradiated by the track of the Saints. 'The light goeth forward,' and its beams impart a golden touch to even things material when they come within its range. Places that were

ly little known, now .
d throughout centuries of time,
hty tide of that fame which the
selves would have shrunk from
g, if they had foreseen it in the
ir flesh, but which the Church
acknowledge and to spread after
ture from the earth. What was
ional before the establishment in it
er of the Visitation? What was it
ecame the scene of the marvellous
ral career of Margaret Mary Ala-
What has it been since that period,
is it now? When Margaret Mary
go about asking with her tiny in-
ps to be taught how to pray, litt'
dream how glorious, through h
that Paray becom

gical and devotional, which have grouped themselves around her as a natural centre? The very attacks of our Protestant journals upon the English pilgrimage to Paray* have unintentionally awakened a wide-spread curiosity amongst non-Catholics to know something about a topic which is to them so unfamiliar, and have also stimulated ignorant and careless Catholics to give greater attention of mind to so important a subject, and to increase their fervour in the practice of devotions towards the Heart of Jesus.

Truly 'the path of the just is as a shining light,' and their enemies assist not unfrequently in spreading far and wide, contrary to their real intention, the rays which they wish to extinguish by their adverse comments.

With these prefatory remarks, we now proceed to give a brief sketch of the chief incidents in the life of Blessed Margaret Mary. 'There is no study, after that of the Sacred Scriptures,' says Father Faber, 'which will yield a man more profit for his soul than an assiduous perusal of the biographies of the Saints;' and as we like to trace any great object of nature from its germinal starting-point, so it is especially interesting to watch the dawn of any remarkable character in the Kingdom

* 4th September 1873.

ins of perfection almost from a
Margaret Mary was of the latter class
as born at Terrau, a little village
undy, on the 22d July, the Feast of
lagdalen, 1647. Her parents were
respectable, her father being a judi-
steemed for his integrity, possessing
sufficient means for every ordinary con-
searing a reputation for charity to
poor. Margaret, when quite in her
showed the signal influence of grace
following manner. She had a peculiar
of sin even before she had any defini-
its real nature and consequences.
chilling shadow seemed to pass over
at the bare notion of anything oppo-
sitive to the will of God; without any very ac-
knowledge of what was meant by

not pleased with her; in an instant she not only became quiet and obedient, but showed signs of deep compunction. As an example of her supernaturally instinctive yearning towards high aspirations, she took a vow of chastity when hardly four years old. This vow was made one day, at the Holy Sacrifice, during the moment of consecration; and when relating the circumstance, long after, to her confessor, Father Rolin, S.J., in obedience to his command, she says, 'I did not understand what I had done, nor the meaning of either the word "vow" or "chastity."' But she acted under an internal guidance which framed for her the intention and the language. If this seems strange, it must be remembered that just as a painter begins his picture by a line here and a line there, and it is only at the conclusion that the spectator perceives on the canvas the full image of the idea which was in the artist's mind from the beginning, so—if we may reverently use the analogy—the Holy Ghost may imprint on a soul the rudimentary lines of a particular virtue, which the soul itself does not at the time intellectually comprehend. Thus Margaret was drawn into the sacred circle of a vow of chastity when she was unable to do more than feel and correspond to a yearning, which she afterwards saw

Young as she was, she already had the power of His voice Who has many chosen souls, 'I will allure her, and will lead her into the wilderness, and speak to her heart' (Osee ii. 14). Naturally merry-hearted, effusive children, in her affections, and an unusually quick intelligence, she was found to be constantly escaping from the presence and conversation of those of her age, as well as of her elders, in order to be by herself in some solitary nook, to be alone. She was one of those doves who, when unfledged, found herself, partly from being sullied by contact with creatures of another kind, partly from love of stillness, ever with an opportunity to bury herself in the rock.

was kept. This was the real home of Margaret; when not engaged in her tasks, she was always sure to be discovered upon her bare knees, and with uplifted hands, before our Divine Lord in the tabernacle. It was during her stay with Madame de Fautrières that she manifested a remarkable insight into the character of one of her teachers. There were two ladies who gave her religious instruction: one whose manners were rather stern; the other who was fond of humouring her fancies and petting her with endearing caresses. Contrary to the ordinary tendency of childhood, which dislikes reproof, Margaret preferred the severe mistress; and that this preference was a supernatural instinct was afterwards evident from the fact that the other lady proved to be a most pernicious character.

After remaining some time with Madame de Fautrières, Margaret returned to her mother. At eight years of age her father died, leaving her mother burdened with the charge of five sons, and with not very ample means. During the period immediately following, little Margaret seems to have been abandoned to the care of servants, picking up her education in irregular ways, and at broken intervals. When eight years and a half old, she was sent to a school at the convent of the Urbanistes.

plained that they were not summoned for her; so strong even then was her hidden life.

At nine years of age she made Communion. God, Who had no intention she should eventually remain there, sent her a most severe trial. She was afflicted with a terrible attack of rheumatism, accompanied with partial paralysis. After two years she was compelled to leave the convent on account of her sufferings, and was confined to her bed where she continued for two years a prisoner to her bed.

It was during this malady that she vowed to belong, if she was cured, in the same manner to the Blessed Virgin; and this was an instantaneous recovery. It is to be hoped the date of that wonderful

austere. She spent four hours every day, as a regular rule, in prayer; frequently she would take no sleep; she fasted three days in the week, besides often giving the best part of her food to the poor; and, in addition to these practices, she wore an iron chain around her tender body. As if these voluntary mortifications were not enough, God, in His infinite wisdom, placed upon her a peculiar kind of cross, by which He led her to a high degree of humiliation and obedience. For some reason, not recorded, Margaret Mary's mother yielded up the entire management of her house to certain subordinates, who in a short time ruled everybody and everything with the most relentless authority. Margaret had no liberty of action: she could not go to church, or put on a dress, or even take a piece of bread from the table, without permission; she was accused of sins of which she had an indescribable horror, struck with blows, and forced to work as a common servant in her own mother's house.

The effect upon her soul was only to increase her thirst for conformity to Christ. 'From this time,' she says, 'my soul continued so penetrated with the sufferings of our Divine Saviour, that I should have desired my pains never to cease for a moment.'

These trials were followed by one of a to-

to her, when she had married for marriage, that she ought to secure a desirable alliance, and thus secure comfort and peace during her widowhood. She remembered her vow as a cardinal principle, and determined to be firm; but occasionally she confessed, the love of her mother, and the desire of adding to her cup of sorrow what she allowed herself to mingle with her grief more than formerly. For a short time she lived a kind of double existence. She was in high spirits, and all her natural attractiveness flowed out to her from her looks, deportment, and conversation, so that she ran a risk of being courted by those who aspired to her hand. Meaning it, she indirectly gave success. This was one phase.]

fling aside her dress, 'the accursed livery of Satan,' as she termed it, and spend the long night in prostration on the ground wet with her tears, making the blood start by the sharp discipline of the scourge, and lying on a hard plank, or on knotty sticks, which she placed in her bed.

The Psalmist, speaking of God, says, 'Thy arrows are fastened in me, and Thy hand hath been strong upon me' (xxxvii. 2); and so it was with Margaret Mary. Notwithstanding the appeals made to her by her mother that she should accept some offer of marriage, and the temptation of breaking the galling yoke of those who were allowed to exercise an unjust authority over her, the 'arrow of God' was never plucked out of her heart by any selfish consideration. She was ready to undergo suffering, but not to violate the vow lisped by her infant lips, and which must ever be a barrier between her and the proposals of suitors, however advantageous. The Divine arrow was really 'fastened' in the centre of her soul, and if ever through a momentary thoughtlessness she seemed to be bounding away towards more worldly pastures, she felt the sharp pull of the barb with an intensity beyond description. At times, when she was excited by her imagination to think of the pleasures of society, the

terly confounded with the thought of frailty and ingratitude. Her only comfort then in penance, in visits to the Blessed Sacrament, in teaching the Catechism to the abandoned children that she could come to her ; and, above all, in the sorrows and dressing the wounds, loathsome, of the sick poor of the hospital.

During this period of her residence in the hospital there appeared, at first vaguely, then in a more definite form, the vocation to religion. The idea fascinated on the one hand with its exceeding beauty and on the other it terrified her with its remoteness and difficulty. All kinds of doubts came from the great adversary of souls into her fancy. Hardly]

between her and the Divine light, so that she was transfixed with an agony of depressing doubt. The graces received in the Sacrament of Confirmation, which was administered to her in 1669 by the Bishop of Châlons-sur-Saône, produced a remarkable effect, by strengthening her resolution to persevere in her aspirations towards religion; and she also united herself in a special manner to the

ERRATUM.

Page 47, line 5, for Sunday read Friday.

Mary lived, and to him she communicated the desire of her soul. He encouraged her strongly, and so effectually pleaded her cause, that her mother and brother, who had hitherto opposed her wishes by reasonings and entreaties, at last agreed to what they saw was inevitable; for she declared that she would rather die than renounce her intention.

Having yielded this point, her relatives imagined that Margaret Mary would readily defer to their wishes in the choice of an Order.

they thought would weigh with Maria in favour of the Ursulines were in precisely the reasons for resisting. Nothing human was to be admitted in the decision of what was the sole work of God. She had a feeling to combine personal likings, or relation of kinship, with the drawings of the Spirit; of putting untempered motives on the sacred stones of the Temple. she said, 'is to go to a convent without distance, and where I have neither acquaintances, for I will be only for the sake of God!'

The names of many convents were mentioned to her, but she showed no approval until she heard of the one belonging to the Order of the Visitation, at 1

only spot where she could henceforth live; it was as though it had been traced there long before in the 'invisible ink' of the writing of the Spirit of God, and had now started into glowing manifestation when the time arrived for her to forsake her home in the world. Paray was not a selection, but an inspiration.

The Order of the Visitation was founded by St. Francis of Sales, and it is interesting to remember that he proposed for its armorial bearings 'a heart pierced by two arrows, and encircled by a crown of thorns; this poor heart serving as a base for a cross surmounting it, and bearing engraved upon it the holy names of Jesus and Mary.' The chief virtues which the Saint desired the daughters of the Order to aim at more especially were humility producing the deepest reverence towards God, and gentleness sweet and charitable towards their neighbours; one of his sayings being that they were to 'gather these virtues at the foot of the Cross, where they grow, and are bedewed with the Blood of that Beloved Spouse Who is nailed to their hearts as He was to the Cross.' How the subsequent history of Margaret Mary gives the clue to her having been guided to this particular Order by the direct Providence of God is so obvious as to require no commentary.

... sublime mystical
been beside herself through
—St. Mary Magdalen of Paz
when she prepared to leave t
her, the conflict between natur
so strong, that she felt as if
riven in two; but no sooner h
the threshold of the convent th
before the Ark of God, she 'leap
with delight. After three mont
she was clothed on the 24th of
ing the whole of her noviceship
eminent for her thirst for pray
extraordinary simplicity which
was exalted before her entrance
der to an unusual height of coi
God, look down upon herself as
ant of the art of devotion

manner of prayer to which the rest of the community were accustomed. As soon as she commenced, she was borne off as by some irresistible influence into an ecstatic state, in which she had no sense of time or exterior things. The nuns at first were perplexed; they could not be quite sure if her conduct were eccentricity, or an illusion, or an extraordinary disposition of soul which it was beyond her own power to regulate. In order to restrain her, she was ordered to sweep the floors, and to work in the store-room, and to occupy herself in various menial offices.

But the bitterest cup that was presented to her was the threat to send her out of the convent, as unsuited to an Order whose holy ambition was simplicity in devotion, as in all other things. To console her, our Divine Lord gave her to understand that He would forego even His own directions to her soul, if they could not be obeyed without infringing the wishes of her Superior.

What can be a more striking proof of the peculiar sacredness and importance which God attaches to the authority of those who hold office as Superiors in religious communities than the fact of Jesus Christ waiving, as He were, His own sovereign rights in their favour? He who revealed His own will to Mar-

... upon 1
ple of religious perfection, an
the subjection of one creature
in it. 'Be thou always read
Blosius in his *Spiritual Mirr*
work done from pure obedien
ing to God than a great work
the motive of self-will. The
thine own will, thine own se
own seeking, is a sacrifice to
God. Obedience, which is the
of humility, renders man fit fo
of every kind of grace, and is t
to heaven.'

A blind world may consisten
ignorance, of the slavery and f
obedience to the will of a man
man perceiveth not these thin
the C...

'I will dispense My favours to thee,' said our Lord to Margaret Mary, 'according to the spirit of thy rule, the will of thy Superiors, and thine own weakness. I am content that thou prefer the will of thy Superiors, whenever they shall forbid thee to do what I shall order thee; nevertheless I shall know how to make My designs succeed, even by means which may seem in opposition to them.'

The result was such a wonderful minute observance of the Rules of the Order by the novice, that all obstacles vanished, and on the 6th of November 1672 she was professed.

HER VISIONS.

MARGARET MARY's life now became a long series of supernatural cravings or desires and of internal communications and special interventions on the part of her Master. Amongst the many extraordinary favours which God poured like a flood upon her soul was that of imparting His revelations in supernatural visions. To give our readers any adequate idea of the singular beauty and the symbolical beauty, or the number and variety of these manifestations, is not possible within the necessarily limited space of these pages. Each particular vision has its distinct purpose: sometimes it has reference chiefly to Margaret herself, tea

der diabolic persecutions, when the pressure was crushing her beyond human endurance. But although each vision had its own definite, temporary, and personal character, and the several features varied, yet all, if I may use the illustration, were united in one grand spiritual expression. The separate rays ever formed one changeless, dazzling light; the letters ever terminated in one message; the revelations were all preparatory to the unfolding of one ineffable mystery—the incomprehensible adorableness, power, mercy, and attraction of the Victim-Heart of God Incarnate. This is the true key to all the visions recorded in the life of Margaret Mary.

There are times when God in His love for man breaks forth through the clouds of His usual reserve, and in His Divine jealousy 'compels men to come' into His mercy by unusual modes of interposition; 'He *reveals* His arm,' and 'lifts up' His imploring voice, and enables the weak things of the world to be His angels upon earth, and to succeed where giants have failed. Such is the impression which the history of Margaret Mary, like that of other elect apostles, produces on the mind.

The account of her visions written by herself is preserved at Paray; and, although the Church has pronounced no judgment on their

establish the devotion to His
Moreover, it is difficult to imagine
could be a character more capable
that of Margaret Mary to stand
reality upon her assertions.

‘An objection is sometimes made
ther Faber,^o ‘to accounts of mira-
culous favours which could not be known
by the Saint’s own disclosure. But
need not allow himself to be shaken
if he examines the rigid minutiae
search after notes of vainglory in
the Congregation, he may acquire
alternative that the Saint has none
either under obedience, or else for
glory of God, as St. Paul mentions
his own credit, and Abbot John
and St. Ignatius, and the Venerable
mine. If the servants of God have
canonised or beatified

unquestionably fictitious, but it will be found that those who professed to have seen them were either intellectually weak, or suffering from a diseased brain, or subject to illusions of Satan, or that from vanity they invented fictions in order to create a sensation, and draw upon themselves the notice of others.

All the elements of possible suspicion were absent in the case of Margaret Mary. Intellectually she was open to no disparagement. Fr. Croiset, who knew her, says that she had 'a powerful understanding, and a solid, clear, and penetrating judgment.' However ill she might be, she was conspicuous for her fidelity to the rules of her Order, when it was possible to obey them; and as for the desire of display, she was perpetually thirsting for humiliations: it gave her the most excruciating mental pain to write any account of her unusual graces. This repugnance is a strong proof of sanctity, whilst eagerness to communicate extraordinary Divine favours is always a suspicious fact.

The following supplication has been found amongst the many prayers recorded by her own hand: 'My Lord and my God, Who alone knowest the pain which I suffer in writing all this, and the violence which I am obliged to do to myself in order to overcome the repugnance and confusion which I feel, grant me the grace

would be able to distinguish His
from the wiles of Satan, her own
any merely natural cause, by t
marks: after a Divine commun
would suffer humiliation from cr
be plunged into a profound sense
nothingness; she would never fe
for others, no matter how clearly
evil state of their hearts; but, on t
would only pity and pray for them
rior revelations would ever inclin
in her obedience to the rules of he
in the minutest points; and finally
dency would be to lead her (1) to
Christ with a supreme affection;
perfectly His example; (3) to su
the fact being perceived; and (4)
insatiable thirst to commu

above all, humility going before, accomplishing, and following. It is morally impossible that a soul profoundly humble can be culpably deceived.

Cardinal Bona, in his treatise on the Discernment of Spirits, gives the following amongst other characteristics of the visions, apparitions, and revelations of St. Teresa, and proposes them as a general test of the value of all other alleged events of a similar kind. St. Teresa was afraid of diabolical illusions, and not only did not desire visions, but prayed that she might be led in the ordinary way; she obeyed her directors most carefully, and though exceedingly reluctant to manifest to others indiscriminately her Divine communications, she narrated them to her directors and to learned men with great frankness. He Who spoke to her interiorly reprehended her imperfections. She loved her persecutors. Her conversation inclined the most tepid to pious thoughts and affections. The visions usually came to her after fervent prayer and reception of the Holy Eucharist, kindling in her renewed love for God, and a most intense desire of suffering for Him. She subdued the flesh by severe castigation, tore herself from all human affection, rejoiced in tribulations, was equally tranquil in adversity and prosperity; and learned

one of His servants, and it is impossible to read these characteristics without being forcibly impressed with their perfect correspondence to those recorded in the life of Margaret Mary Alacoque.

So deep was her self-abasement that, notwithstanding the remarkable favours and graces of which she was constantly partaking she was accustomed to say, 'The abuse of grace which I have received is so great, that I have nothing in myself that does not deserve eternal punishment.'

We are not surprised indeed to find her humility declared in the decree of her beatification to have been marvellous. 'There shone forth in her a wonderful humility' (*miranda humilitas*).

But even the form which she bore of Satan:

apply to her. Moreover, every species of opposition which was calculated to probe her to the quick, and break down whatever was unreal, only resulted in a glorious confirmation of her sanctity; whilst miracles* after her death, the foretold triumph of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, still gathering force every day in every country, and the decree of her beatification by Pius IX., all point to one conclusion, namely, that it is a rational duty as well as a spiritual delight to recognise in Margaret Mary that Divine Power which enables those giants in grace, the Saints, to 'walk with God,' although a blind world may stumble at the miraculous footprints that from time to time cross its path.

One of the first occasions on which our Lord showed Himself to her was when she was despondent through inability to conquer a certain repugnance, which was physical rather than moral; He appeared all covered with wounds, and declared that He was suffering through love of her because she could not for His sake conquer her will. On her pleading

* 'The opinion which had prevailed of the Venerable Margaret Mary's sanctity became more general after her death, especially when confirmed by repeated miracles which were said to have been wrought through the intercession of the venerable servant of God.' *Decree of Beatification.*

everything became easy to her f
One day, the evening before her
she beheld the Sacred Heart shin
zingly than the sun, and far bey
in size; but the Heart was no
there could be discerned a small
atom, which seemed ever strainin
that splendour, and yet was ev
reach its glorious mark: then
Heart drew this tiny atom into
these words: 'Lose thyself in M
and see thou never come forth &
atom was to represent the heart
Mary. On another occasion, w
absorbed in prayer, the wound
of Jesus was disclosed to her; it
at the entrance. and led to &

thorns, saying that they pierced His brain, and bidding her to pluck them out by acts of humility : these thorns, He said, were wounds caused by the faults of one of the Religious in the community.

She also records having seen the following remarkable words written on the Sacred Heart : ' My love reigns in suffering, triumphs in humility, and rejoices in unity.'

Amongst other beautiful and strikingly symbolical modes in which our Lord pictured His will before the soul of Margaret Mary may be mentioned that which unfolded to her His Heart as a mystical garden, full of various and exquisite kinds of flowers, spreading around a wonderful beauty and fragrance. Margaret dared not touch them ; but on being told by our Lord to gather what she liked, she cast herself at His feet, and exclaimed, ' I wish for none but Thyself, Who art a bundle of myrrh to me, which I should like to carry for ever in the arms of love.'

The Sacred Heart also appeared to her in the form of a tree, spreading its extensive branches throughout all the houses of the Order of the Visitation, to indicate the important part which they were to take in the diffusion of its reign over the hearts of men. She had also a singular vision, in which she

c

worship, and

hands crossing His eyes were

He could not listen to the prayer
soul which had just received Him
dispositions. It would be too long
she was permitted to lean upon
like St. John, to apply her lips to
for two or three hours, drawing
most unspeakable pleasure and
staunch the wounds of His bleeding
see His Heart dragged about as
by being forced into souls unfit for
Eucharist; and at other times
pouring forth streams of living
fountain into elect hearts, or d
indescribable splendour from a
and flames on which It was
and her own heart drawn from

having found

and exclaiming, 'Will no one compassionate Me and take part in My sorrow in the piteous state to which sinners reduce Me, especially at this time?' On hearing these words she threw herself at His bleeding feet, and then a cross, whose weight she could scarcely bear, and which was studded with sharp nails, was laid upon her shoulder; and she not only carried it, but fastened herself to it at His wish, in order that she might thus share in the outrages which He was undergoing from sinners.

The last-mentioned vision is remarkable, because it was accompanied by agonising pain in that part of her side from which her heart appeared to have been taken—a pain which our Lord foretold should always remain as a proof of the reality of His presence in that particular vision; just as in Jacob's vision of old the sinew of his thigh shrank, and became a continual evidence that a real and not an imaginary angel had wrestled with him during the night, 'when he was alone;' and at break of day touched the sinew, 'and forthwith it shrank' (Gen. xxxii. 25). The pain in Margaret's side could never be relieved, as our Lord told her, except by bleeding; and frequently, rather than consent to this alleviation, she preferred to suffer the torment in all its unmitigated severity.

CHAPTER III.

HER EXPIATORY SUFFERINGS.

the first Friday of every month the Sacred
art regularly appeared to her, under the
t of a blazing sun, which poured its
ching, yet vitalising, rays into her own
st. It was on one of these occasions that
received the following definite commands :
She was to communicate as often as she
not forbidden by her Superiors ; (2) she
to make a rule of communicating on the
Friday of every month ; and (3) she was
plunged every night between Thursday
Friday into an agony of sadness and
ation, which should be a repetition, or
r a reflection, so to speak, within her
of the terrible was endured by her

in the Garden of Sorrows when the Apostles fell asleep through weariness, and that, whilst thus sweetening for Him some of the bitterness which their conduct had caused in His Heart, she should also implore mercy for sinners.

On several occasions our Lord condescended to make this elect spouse sympathise in His sorrows, not merely by bringing before her mind, in the form of a mental contemplation, the recollection of what He had undergone, but by so uniting her with Himself and the scenes of His suffering life, that, by a kind of mysterious intercommunion, she became, to adopt St. Peter's expression, a real 'partaker in the sufferings of Christ' (1 Peter iv. 13). She participated to an extraordinary degree in that fellowship 'of the Cross of Christ' by which, St. Leo says, 'we ourselves coöperate in some measure with that which He has achieved for us;' for 'if we suffer we shall also reign with Him,' writes the Apostle Paul (2 Tim. ii. 12). The Crucified drew her so closely to Him, that His thorns, spear, and nails entered mystically into her own being; she lived, in some sense, which it is beyond the power of human language to explain, the life of the Man-God, as He Himself declared that she should; and not only did she un-

ne by offering up those pains of her own as a mode of intercession for them. Her pains themselves were worthless ; but such is the carious force of charity, such is the all-pervading effect of co-membership in that church which is the ' Body of Christ,' such is the desire of the Head that His virtue should flow through secondary and inferior channels united with Himself, that many souls were restored to favour and pardon through Margaret's holy afflictions, whom their Lord would not have forgiven so easily, if at all, had she not thrown her mite of expiation into the treasury of that Heart of Jesus which had inspired and enabled her to present the offerings.

Incidents and revelations of this kind in the life of Blessed Margaret are a luminous com-

'I bear the marks of the Lord in my body' (Gal. vi. 17). 'With Christ I am nailed to the Cross' (Gal. ii. 19). Speaking of certain nuns who had failed in their duty to Jesus Christ, Margaret Mary says that He told her to charge herself with the burden of restoring them to His favour, and she succeeded; but she adds, 'I had to suffer much. Hell itself is not more dreadful than a heart deprived of the love of my Beloved.'

It is a matter of faith, the denial of which would be heresy, that Christ's sufferings were more than sufficient to redeem the world and atone for every sin that has been or could be committed by man. But it is no less true that Christ, in His own infinite wisdom, makes the application of this redemption and the gift of many graces to individuals dependent upon certain conditions. As incorporation into His Church, faith, hope, charity, prayers, obedience, and sacraments are undoubtedly necessary in order that we may share in the fruits of Christ's meritorious works, so also He makes suffering a means of this participation. If Christ is induced to grant many mercies for others if we pray for them, which He would not have conceded without our prayers, it is not difficult to understand that He may also lay crosses on some members

part of the same dispensation to carry it on
the aid of fellow-sufferers. The Church
Christ is 'one body,' and, as many of the
fathers say, the *suffering* of Christ and His
Church is one, since their *life and soul* are one.
Christ,' writes St. Augustine, 'is not only
fully in the head, but also totally in the
members.' Thus the sufferings of His living mem-
bers are united to His own, even called His
sufferings, and therefore possess a special value in
His sight. When Saul persecuted the Chris-
tians, He did not, says St. Augustine, call
on His servants, or even His friends, but
on *himself*: 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou
me?' As also Jesus Christ delights in utilis-
ing so to speak, every good work of His own
children by drawing it into an exalting fellow-
ship with His own obedience to His Heavenly
Father, and making it fertile in advantages

brethren by enduring hard sacrifices for their sakes: thus they like Him become poor, that others through their poverty may become rich.

Those who regard the redemption of man by Christ as a merely outward payment by Him of a debt due from guilty sinners to God, also regard the pardon of man and the relation that has been established between Christ and him as entirely external. They do not comprehend that the atoning act on the Cross was only the beginning of that mystery of love by which Christ the Second Adam incorporates us into Himself, so that as the branches live by the very life of the vine, and through the power of that imparted life 'bring forth fruit,' in like manner the Spirit of Jesus dwells in man. The Christian is said by St. Paul to be 'a new creature *in* Christ' (2 Cor. v. 17); to have 'Christ *in* him, the hope of glory' (Col. i. 27); 'the Holy Ghost dwelleth *in* us' (2 Tim. i. 14); and Christ is described as 'our life;' not our future life only, but our *present* life—'Christ, Who *is* your life,' says St. Paul (Col. iii. 4). 'Abide in Me and I in you,' is our Lord's own command (John xv. 4). 'Not I but Christ liveth in me,' is the Apostle's description of himself (Gal. ii. 20). 'He who is joined to the Lord is *one* spirit,' *i.e.* one spirit

sh, and of His ...
ord moreover prayed not for
aly, but 'for them also who thro
ord shall believe in Me; that al
one, as Thou, Father, in Me and I
that they may be one in Us ... that
be one, as We also are One' (John xv)
What Catholic language can go bey
words? This is the true Gospel,
who believe it recognise the sacred
the actions and sufferings of those
vitaly united to Jesus Christ.
Christianity is a human fiction
Divine reality.

In further illustration of the pe
atory office which our Lord freque
our Saint to fulfil in behalf of ot
here mention that she suffered i
manner during every carnival,
processes that were then co
and always

rigour of the Divine justice, with regard to the dispensation of His mercy through Indulgences, is presented to us in these words, addressed to Margaret Mary during a Jubilee! After saying that His own people 'persecute Him by their familiarities,' He bids Margaret to 'weep and sigh for His Blood uselessly shed for so many souls who make so great an abuse of it in these Indulgences; they are content to cut down the bad weeds which have grown in their hearts, without wishing to pluck them up by their roots.'

Sometimes our Lord, in order to save a soul which was on the point of being lost for ever, would make His servant feel the frightful agony of a reprobate sinner at the point of death; with reference to which she said: 'I never experienced anything so horrible; I have no words to explain it.'

CHAPTER IV.

FATHER DE LA COLOMBIÈRE.

At the close of 1674 an event took place which formed a signal epoch in Margaret's life. She had undergone much rough treatment from some members of the community, in whose erroneous judgment she was looked upon as a visionary enthusiast, and a dupe of fanciful impressions. Even the friends of Paray were for some time of the same opinion, which they did not hesitate to avow.

Margaret Mary felt keenly this unjust imputation; but instead of resenting it by a severe protest against its temerity and uncharity, she humbly raised up her hands to God, and He so disposed events as that the director distinguished for sanctity and

ment he beheld her ; and to confirm the fact in an irresistible manner, the following vision was granted to Margaret :

As she was going up to the altar, our Lord showed to her His Sacred Heart, glowing like a furnace ; and then two other hearts appeared to enter into and be lost in its abyss, whilst she heard internally these words, ' It is thus that My pure Heart unites these three hearts eternally.' She then was made to understand that our Lord intended to make herself and Father de la Colombière the peculiar instruments for spreading abroad the glory and treasures of the Heart of Jesus. She was first to unfold to him, in a way hitherto unexperienced by himself, the value of that Heart, and Its power over the hearts, and for the salvation of, sinners. And when she began deploring to God her unworthiness to be associated with such a superior agent as Father de la Colombière, our Lord said to her, ' The infinite riches of My Heart will equalise and supply everything.'

Father de la Colombière made a most strict examination of his penitent's soul, and after watching her conduct as proved by most severe tests applied to her in order to ascertain her humility, love of mortification, and obedience, and after comparing all those lights from na-

the undoubted
illuminations, ecstasies, and
visions were really the work of God. It
was to be in some manner a fellow-
of the Sacred Heart together with M
Mary, he knew from what she had t
about the vision of the three unite
But he was hitherto only, as it we
tively feeling his way in the twilight;
were still around him, although
moving off; he experienced an un
to love more than ever the Heart c
it was not until the summer of 1
light fell clearly upon the design
and Master.

One day, during the Octav
Christi in the above-mentioned
was kneeling a little behind th
choir of the Sisters; the Ble
exposed on the high al
he felt moved

turn, I receive from the greater part only ingratitude, because of the contempt, irreverence, sacrilege, and coldness which they show Me in this Sacrament of love. . . . On this account, I ask of you that the first Sunday after the Octave of Corpus Christi be set apart for a special feast to honour My Heart by communicating on that day, and making reparation to It by a solemn act, in order to repair the indignities It has received during the time It has been exposed on My altars. I also promise you that My Heart shall expand Itself, so as to shed in abundance the influence of Its Divine love upon those who shall pay It this honour, and procure It to be paid.' Margaret Mary, overwhelmed by this intimation, complained of her inability to carry out the will of her Lord. He then reminded her how He chooses the weakest things to confound the strong, that they may attribute nothing to their own powers, and finally gave her the following explicit command: 'Address thyself to My servant (indicating Father de la Colombière), and tell him from Me to do what he can to establish the devotion, and to give pleasure to My Divine Heart. Let him not be discouraged at the difficulties which he will meet with, for there will be no lack of them; but he must remember that those are all-

consecrated himself to his people—
from that moment commenced to flow
of this most profound and soul-melting
of piety—at first a small rill, but aft
destined to gather volume and intensi
the whole world has begun to be cons
its fertilising current.



CHAPTER V.

TRIBULATIONS AND DEATH.

SATAN, the great enemy of man from the Creation, and especially of those souls who are the most complete representatives upon earth of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, did not forbear to annoy Margaret Mary with his malicious attacks. Sometimes he endeavoured to destroy her trust in God by filling her imagination with desponding ideas; sometimes he assumed a visible form of horrible loathsomeness; once he threw her down headlong from the top to the bottom of some stairs, whilst she was carrying a brazier of burning coals, in the presence of several Sisters, who were astonished to see that not a single ember was thrown out of the pan by a shock violent enough, as they considered, to have broken both of her legs. But the most distressing of these diabolic assaults was a ravening hunger for food: the singularity of it consisting in the indisposition she experienced for food when it was placed before her, and the instantaneous

from the community at Paray.

She was in this respect only the usual path of the Saints.* At one instance, the seraphic St. Teresa was credited that she could not prevail upon a priest to hear her confessions, and was also denounced to the Inquisition on these causes,' says Benedict XIV., 'it is not less loudly inquired whether the servant of God suffered distresses, and what sort of labors, and with what patience and charity she endured them.'

Hence it has been truly said that the life of a saint is a life of suffering, and of all sufferings especially of mortification and opposition of good men. It may be an *inseparable accident* of sanctity, as and so far as it is heroic.' So the element of sanctity is this peculiar mortification considered by the Council of Trent, the Congregation of Rites, in exa-

the opposition even of good men, as though these afflictions and thwartings were, so to speak, authentications which Providence is sure to give to heroic virtue.'

Margaret Mary was told by her Lord that, in order to propitiate His mercy for certain faults of His elect spouses, she must become a victim of immolation. For this end He disclosed to her His offended justice in such an awful manner, that she says, 'it seemed as though I saw hell opened to swallow me up. I felt as if I was burning all through the marrow of my bones; my whole body quivered, and I could only cry out, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to the greatness of Thy mercies."' Prostrate as she was, through being unable to move, eat, or explain the depth of agony in which she was ever sinking lower as into a fathomless abyss, and tormented by Satan besides, she drank the last dregs of confusion when she found herself regarded by many of the religious as a hypocrite; by others as possessed by the devil; and by almost all as a morbid visionary, who would be best cured by being roughly handled. Signs of the Cross were made over her, and she was sprinkled with holy water, and dragged violently about through the convent. Her only thought was how best to carry out one of

ignorance treated Margaret as th
a diseased fancy or of the devil's an
of being what she was—a victim o
and sanctity of God, whom He c
to assimilate to Himself—confe
error; and the Saint's character al
more brilliantly than ever in its
simplicity and humility.

The above-mentioned trial took
the 20th of November 1677. On
day of December 1678, Margaret M
a complete oblation of her whole
our Lord, in the form of a mysti
ment; she offered also all the good
might ever do in her life, or that
done for her after her death, besee
Adorable Heart to dispose of it as E
for the advantage of any one, alive
whom He should choose for that

she was freely to use this amazing mercy for the benefit of sinners, and that He would never fail to have pity upon them at her intercession. As the words were dictated to her, she wrote them all down in her own blood. In reference to this will, it is narrated that when the tracing over her heart became slightly lessened in distinctness, she burned the place with a lighted taper, thus causing a wound so severe that she was obliged to mention the fact to the Mother Superior, Madame Greyfié. Upon this she was ordered to show the wound to one of the Sisters. Margaret, however, full of confusion at the circumstance being known, prayed to God for a cure; and her prayer was heard, for when the Sister saw the place, she found, as she herself deposed, a great scar, forming the letters 'Jesus,' in similar characters to those which are 'stamped with moulds on large books.' As a correction, however, for some slight act of disobedience to the Mother Superior, our Lord told her that the tracery should entirely disappear; and such was discovered to be the case when the Sisters laid out her body after her death.

In 1682, Margaret Mary sustained a great loss in the death of Father de la Colombière, who, after being banished from England in

684, Margaret Mary ...

the new Mother Superior of the Marie Christine Melin; and six months afterwards, in consequence of the illness of the mistress of the novices, Margaret was appointed in her place.

She was ever watchful to lead the novices to have the happiness of being under obedience to higher perfection in motivation; but whilst she was full of her gentleness, she was ever most firm in requiring the strictest obedience to her as Superior, and even to the slightest wish, saying that the readiness and integrity of obedience were necessary to conquer thoroughly attachment to self-will.

'The soul of obedience,' she said, 'is in having no will of our own, in not pursuing our own desire, or in not p

been preserved, and occasionally she put them in writing at their especial request.

We give the following as an illustration of the kind and style of her exhortations :

On one occasion she wrote thus to her spiritual daughters :*

'Behold, my dear children, you force me to write what I have said to you, particularly concerning the Sacred Heart of our Lord ; but if you do not profit by it, I will myself ask Him to punish you ; that is, if you should forget or despise it. Take care, for I warn you frequently of this ; the grace that our Lord has begun in you will raise you to a high degree of perfection, provided you allow it a free course by a faithful correspondence on your part. Like the rising sun, you must advance and gather strength as you go. Your names are written in the adorable Heart, but as yet only with ink ; you are but beginners, and grace comes to enlighten your darkness, to assist you to combat and vanquish your imperfections, especially that natural pride which creeps in everywhere. Your names will be written in characters of silver, when your intentions, purified in the furnace of pure love, shall no longer retain anything human and

* *Life of Ven. M. M. Alacoque*, vol. ii. p. 55, Oratorian Series.

of gold. It is pure love and
 to attain to this happiness; you
 be, as it were, holocausts entirely
 in the fire of holy charity, the centre
 is the Heart of our Saviour. To ar
 you must suffer with love, offer a
 violence to yourselves, and mortify
 ble yourselves through love. When,
 commit some act of pride or self-lov
 excusing yourselves, or endeavourin
 uate yourselves into the esteem or
 of creatures, or when you do anyth
 in word or action, that you would
 have done to yourselves, these ac
 so many letters of your names wh
 efface from the Divine Heart of

In her instructions for Advent
 these amongst other resolutio
 drawn from her own practice :
 to recreation, I w

humiliations and contradictions that I may meet with.

‘When I am oppressed with heat, I will beg Him Who is the burning furnace of pure love, so to inflame our hearts with this Divine fire, that being consumed they may become all love, in order to love Him incessantly.

‘When I suffer thirst, it shall be in honour of that which the adorable Heart of Jesus experiences for the salvation of men, and that He may be known, adored, and loved by them in the Sacrament of His love.’*

Margaret Mary was fervent in recommending to her novices a constant devotion to the Sacred Heart; and in order to further her wishes, they erected a little altar, upon which they placed a pen-and-ink picture of the Sacred Heart. This is the earliest instance of any public manifestation of devotion to the picture of the Heart of Jesus; but, strange to say, the fervour of the mistress and her novices only served to bring upon all of them a severe cross; for some of the Sisters, when they were invited to join in the devotion, not only refused, but severely blamed Margaret Mary for introducing novelties and violating the spirit of the rule of the Order.

* *Life of Ven. M. M. Alacoque*, vol. ii. p. 69, Oratorian Series.

Francis of Sales, in which he told the devotion of the Sacred Heart was the principal means of preserving his Ourselves from the danger of falling away from its truth. M^{de}. Greyfié, formerly Mother Superior of Paray, and now of Semur, was so affected by this revelation that she erected an altar and placed in it a picture of the Sacred Heart. Of this picture she sent a miniature to Margaret Mary; and on the last day of the Octave of Corpus Christi, Margaret Mary, to her surprise, received a request from the Sisters that she would allow that picture to be exposed in the choir. One of that Sister was Mary Magdalen des Ursules, and she was one of those who, from the most conscientious motives, had been

sorbing love was now somewhat satisfied ; ' I have now,' she said, ' nothing more to desire, since the Sacred Heart is known, and begins now to reign over the hearts of others.' On the 7th of September 1688, a nun was seen in that chapel, then completed, rapt and motionless in prayer ; a procession of many priests and laymen entered, and for two hours the building resounded with sounds of supplication and joy ; but Margaret Mary—for it was she—never stirred ; she felt and saw nothing but her own annihilation, and the ineffable grandeur and sweetness of that Heart Which had become the ceaseless home, refuge, stay, peace, and bliss of her own.

It was in the same year (July 2d, 1688) that Margaret Mary was told, in a remarkable vision, that the Order of the Visitation and the Society of Jesus were to be the two especial instruments in spreading the devotion to the Sacred Heart. The Sacred Heart appeared on a throne, the whole church being lighted up and sensibly heated by the burning rays that streamed from Its wound. On one side was the Blessed Virgin, and on the other stood St. Francis of Sales and Father de la Colombière ; whilst around them were grouped the Daughters of the Visitation and their angel-guardians. The Blessed Virgin told these

...
would be to 'make known the use
value of the Sacred Heart, that all
profit by it.' St. Francis of Sales al
his daughters to make 'the love
constant exercise.'

Two years after the above vision
Mary foretold the approach of the ti
departure from this land of exile.
not live much longer,' she said, at
July 1690, 'for I have no longer a
suffer; I shall certainly die this ye
that I may not hinder the great fi
our Divine Lord designs to produce
of a book of devotion to the Sacr
This prophecy evidently referred
commenced by Father Croiset, S.J.
but whose publication was unavo
layed until the next year, thus enabl
give an account of Margaret Mary

annual retreat, and on being asked if she wished to join it, for she was in a very feeble state of body, she replied, 'Yes; but it will be the *great* retreat.' During the retreat she was confined to her bed, but the usual medical attendant of the convent had seen Margaret Mary so often recover when on the brink of death, that he thought there was no real danger. She, however, earnestly begged to have the Holy Viaticum brought to her, and she communicated with, if possible, more than usual fervour. She refused all alleviation of her painful discomfort, saying, 'that time was too precious not to turn it to the best account.' Then a shadow of the justice of God seemed to pass through her soul for a few moments, and she trembled; but a glow of radiant peace, yearning, and joy soon almost transfigured her emaciated face. Often she exclaimed, 'O, what a delight it is to love God! Beg pardon of Him for me, and love Him with all your hearts, to make amends for the time during which I have failed so to do.'

Her humility was, next to her love, 'her strong passion' even in death, and some of her latest words were a request that the Mother Superior would promise never to reveal anything to her own advantage that she might have told her in the intimacy of confidence

requested him to observe complete secrecy. Her whole thoughts and affections centred on her Lord, so the last word that the two Sisters uttered whose arms were supporting her had supreme happiness to hear from her dear lips was the name of Jesus. This sacred omnipotent word was breathed out together with her soul; and safe under its shield, penetrated through and through with its fragrance and borne on high exultant through its triumphant might, she passed from her poor life into the merciful embrace of Him to Whom she was 'faithful even to death,' and : Whom she was to receive her own 'crown of glory.'

In her prayers she had often exclaimed 'Come, O Life of my heart, O Soul of my
the only Son of my Father, O Jesus, my Lord,

her painful languishing was fully satisfied, the 'martyrdom,' as she called it, of being in the body was over, and, in the beautiful words of the Decree of her Beatification, 'wasted not so much by disease as by the fire of Divine charity, she departed this life on the 17th of October in the year 1690.'

Great as is the glory of all the Saints of the Church, on account of their extraordinary virtues, there is a peculiar kind of immortality about that of Margaret Mary Alacoque; for as her name will ever be associated with the history and spread of the devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, so it will be for ever encircled by the reflected light of Its infinite splendour.

CHAPTER VI.

GOLDEN SAYINGS OF MARGARET

I BELONG for ever to my Beloved, His slave, His handmaid, and His child; He is wholly mine, and I am His wife and spouse, Sister Margaret Mary, from this forth to the world. Wholly from myself; wholly to God; nothing from myself; wholly to God; nothing to myself; wholly for God, and nothing for myself.

We can love Jesus Christ only by loving the Cross.

I have such a desire for the Cross, that if I had to walk barefoot, it seems to me that it would cost me less in comparison with the loss of my shoes.

All things find their rest only in God; my heart is wholly buried in His love.

Every morning when I pray, I present myself to my God as a sick person before an all-powerful Physician, and apart from Whom I can find no refuge or comfort whatever. I have no other impression or movement but that of loving God, and I would willingly give a thousand lives, if possible, to testify to Him the desire and ardour which consume me.

I have nothing to offer Thee, O my God, that is not unworthy of Thee, except Thy well-beloved Son — the possession of Whom Thou givest me with so much love.

So dear to me is the loving will of God, that I would rather see my body exposed to all the furies of hell than do anything contrary to His good pleasure.

It is of little consequence, O my Jesus, in what Thou employest me; my whole time is Thine, not mine.

There is no kind of punishment which I would not have chosen to undergo rather than bear the presence of this God of sanctity, when my soul was blemished with any fault; I would rather a thousand times have thrown myself into a burning furnace.

Do what Thou plearest, O Lord, and it is sufficient for me.

If I had a thousand bodies, a thousand

alone is sufficient for me.

I see more clearly than the d without the love of Jesus Christ i possible misery.

Strike, O my God! burn, cons displeases Thee. Spare not my my flesh, my blood, provided Th nally this soul.

Our Divine Lord has assured who are employed in labouring : tion of souls shall have the ar the most hardened souls, and wil marvellous success if they are the: trated with a tender devotion t Heart.

As regards persons in the wc find in this devotion all the he for their state of life, peace in t relief in their toils, the blessing all their undertakings and con

unable as yet to be separated from my body. The greatest sacrifice that I can make is that of continuing to live. I accept this, however, even to the Day of Judgment, if my God so wills it, though the thought of being kept apart from my Sovereign Good is harder to bear than a thousand deaths.

I see nothing in myself but what deserves eternal punishment.

Jesus Christ wishes to have the love and homage of His creatures from a free and loving heart, without constraint or dissimulation.

I shall die happy now that the Sacred Heart of my Saviour begins to be known and myself unknown; for it seems to me that I am now, by His mercy, almost annihilated in point of esteem and reputation in the minds of others. This gives me greater consolation than I can express.

Forget yourself, and Jesus will think of you. Lose yourself in the abyss of your own nothingness, and you will possess Him.

Endeavour especially to preserve peace of heart; the way to secure this is no longer to have any will, but to take that of the Sacred Heart in place of our own. It will love God for you, and you will love Him in It and by It.

I feel only a perfect acquiescence
good pleasure of God, and an
pleasure in suffering.

My desire to be forgotten and
my death is not less than my work
during my life.

Though God wishes to save
will that we should contribute
wards this work, otherwise He
thing; for this reason we must
suffer.

Trials suffered with patience
thousand times more than any a

Our hearts are made for Jesus
and so can find no repose, joy,
lation, except in Him.

The gift of the pure love of
idle in the heart in which it dwells

The greatest bitterness is only
that Adorable Heart, where

Our hearts are so small that they cannot contain two loves, and being made for Divine Love alone, they find no rest when divided by any other affection.

Love will not have a divided heart; it wishes for all or nothing; love will make all things easy for you.

You will not love Jesus until you know how to suffer in silence.

Nothing is little when it is sacrificed to God from a motive of pure love.

The Adorable Heart of Jesus requires of Its friends poverty in intention, humility in operation, and unity in object.

Be faithful in making a good use of time, employing it for the purpose for which it is destined, and as if it were to be the last of your life.

Let us belong entirely to God by love, to our Superiors by submission, and to our neighbour by charity.

It is better to give up everything and to lose everything rather than to lose the favour of the Adorable Heart of Jesus.

We must fight against ourselves to the end, and die with our arms in our hands, for the crown is given only to the victorious.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TITLE OF VENERABLE—HEROIC VIRTUE.

On the 30th of March 1824, Margaret Mary Alacoque was declared Venerable; on the 23d of August 1846, her virtues were pronounced to have been heroic; on the 24th of April 1864, the truth of certain miracles attributed to her was affirmed; and on the 18th of September in the same year, thousands of voices swelled the *Te Deum* in the Basilica of St. Peter's at Rome, when she was solemnly beatified by Pius IX.

For the benefit of those of our readers who are desirous of understanding the exact meaning of the above-mentioned acts and titles of honour, we proceed to give an explanation, which we hope will be sufficiently full and intelligible for our present purpose.

THE TITLE OF VENERABLE.

This name is, strictly speaking, only applied to a person after the Supreme Pontiff has signed what is called the Commission of Introduction, and which is addressed to the Congregation of

Rites. By this act the fame of a person's sanctity is affirmed to have been judicially proved, and the whole case is taken out of the cognisance of the local Bishops and Ordinaries, and placed under the jurisdiction of the Holy See, but no authorisation is thereby given to the permission of any worship of the person called Venerable.

HEROIC VIRTUE.

The word 'virtue' is sometimes used to signify moral excellence in general, without distinguishing whether it be natural or supernatural, that is, whether it proceeds from ordinarily human motives, independent of Divine grace; and having a natural end for its object, or from spiritual motives, with the aid of superhuman power, and for a supernatural end. It is, perhaps, scarcely necessary to observe that the heroic virtue which is required by the Church to have been possessed by those whom she places amongst the Saints is Divine and Christian virtue, springing from union with Christ, and infallibly tending to the attainment of eternal life.

By *heroic* Christian virtue is to be understood that preëminently high degree of excellence by which he who practises it acts in a more exalted way than ordinary men act in

‘Heroic virtue,’ writes Cassan-
‘is that which either because of the ex-
of the work, or the presence of some
stance which makes the work very
exhibits itself in some act which is
the ordinary human standard of work
that a man is then said to work heroically
when he works beyond the ordinary
even of men working virtuously.’

Such is the description of ‘heroism’
in general: when a virtue reaches to
of superiority which marks a person
the average altitude of others who
righteously, it is called ‘heroic;’ but
are degrees in ordinary virtue up to
of heroicity, so there are indefinitely
degrees in heroicity, by which some
heroes differ from others in glory.

The next question we have to
be understood by the t

cation of Margaret Mary Alacoque, that the Apostolic See, having inquired into her virtues, had decided and 'declared on the 23d of August that they had reached an heroic degree.'

It is to be observed that the plural number is here used; 'her *virtues*' were declared to have been heroic: nor is this a merely accidental use of language, for it would not be sufficient for a Beatification to prove that a person had been heroic in many acts of one or two virtues, or in a few acts of several virtues.

No person can be beatified unless it is shown by the most rigorous testimony that he has reached the heroic degree in all the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and especially charity. 'It is not enough,' says Benedict XIV., 'if the heroic habit of faith be proved by several heroic acts of the virtue of faith; but it is *further requisite* that the heroic habits of other theological and cardinal virtues be proved by other acts.' Heroicity is absolutely required in the theological virtues, because without their illumination and controlling power it would not be possible to elicit the cardinal virtues in their utmost intensity.

In respect to the cardinal virtues—pru-

that heroicity should be
four equally or at all times. 'It is necessary
says Benedict XIV., 'that the existence
the cardinal or moral virtues should be pro
not always, however, but sometimes, by he
actions, and sometimes by ordinary ones,
necessity of heroic actions being restricted
those virtues in which the servant of
whilst he lived was able to exercise his
according to his state and condition of life
nothing, according to St. Thomas, hinder
that a virtuous man may be furnished with
material of one virtue, but not with that of
other, as a poor man has the material of
operance, but not that of magnificence.']
Cassian says : ' One man is adorned with
flowers of knowledge, another is more
adorned by discretion, another has the

To complete the full idea of heroic virtue, it must be added, in conclusion, that besides the difficulty of the virtuous work in itself, which constitutes the chief cause of its extraordinary excellence — a difficulty to be measured by the circumstances of each case—heroicity will not be proved unless it be shown that the virtuous acts were manifold, and performed, not only with self-abnegation, but also with promptitude, ease, and delight. Heroic virtue also requires, says Cardinal de Aguirre, 'that no action must be omitted which would be admirable and perfect relatively to the several circumstances of person, time, and place wherein it ought to be exercised.'

Lastly, heroic virtue demands that there should have been not occasionally magnificent manifestations of excellence, but a continuous perseverance in them up to the hour of death; for it is this sublime unchangeable pursuit after higher and higher perfection that is so victorious over the fickleness and cowardice of nature, and produces that similitude to God which theologians describe as one of the signal effects of that habit which constitutes men truly Saints.

They are to be called heroes, says F. Martin de Esparza, who 'particularly up to the time of their death have persevered in a con-

summit or perfection as to the
and manner, with a firm and inter
of all earthly things, and a corres
hesion to God and divine things.'

Perseverance is a necessary
heroicity, for, as St. Bernard say
essence of all strength and the co
of all virtue.'

It must not, of course, be suppose
one can be beatified or canonise
entire life *from its beginning* has
lessly innocent, as far as is com
the imperfection of a creature ;
accounted Saints on two grounds—
cence, like St. Aloysius of Gonzag
of penitence, like St. Margaret of C
in any case sufficient proof must

CHAPTER VIII.

THE AFFIRMATION OF MIRACLES.

THE proof of miracles wrought during the lifetime of the person, and also after death by impetration or relics, is required before Beatification or Canonisation can take place. For, as Pope Gregory IX. declared on the occasion of the Canonisation of St. Anthony of Padua, 'two things are necessary in order that a man may be accounted in the Church Militant as a Saint; namely, in morals—virtue; and in wonderful deeds—truth; that is to say, merits and miracles. So that each may conjointly witness to the other, since neither merits without miracles nor miracles without merits are fully adequate to establish amongst mankind the testimony of sanctity.'

'Virtue,' also wrote Pope Innocent III., 'is required because some men do good works in order that they may be seen by men, and some sparkle with miracles whose life, however, is deservedly condemned.'

With regard to the strictness of the ordeal through which every alleged extraordinary

most valuable *Essay on Beaty*
Canonisation, which, for accurac
ment, fulness of matter, and lucid
considering its brevity, has no e
ting out of view,' he says, 'all ide
assistance, and looking at the m
as a question of evidence, it is
sible to conceive any process
human testimony more complet
genious, or more rigorous than t
pulously adhered to by the Conq
Rites in this respect. A fact o
the appearance of being supe
awaken against it every suspic
method of surprise and detectio
in array against it; it is allowe
no advantage of a doubt, and any

must be evidently from God, and not the effect of art or of diabolic power. (3) It must not be produced by the force of words, as in Transubstantiation, which is not therefore a miracle, but it must have a connection with the merit of the human agent. (4) It must be wrought in confirmation of the Faith, or in testimony of a person's sanctity. (5) It must be not only produced by God, but also it must be outside the ordinary mode of causation; and therefore the creation of a soul, although by God, is not a miracle.

CHAPTER IX.

BEATIFICATION.

WHEN any person has been declared by the Sovereign Pontiff to be 'beatified' by that act to be called in the Catholic Church *beatus* or *blessed*.

Beatification, strictly speaking, is the definition of Ferraris,* 'is the declaration given by the Roman Pontiff to a particular kingdom, province, community or place, in order that the people may receive a certain public veneration of one who is reigning with Christ in heaven. It may receive a certain public veneration, by the recitation of the Divine Office, the celebration of Mass, the exposition of his relics—and thus

Common of Virgins, with proper and approved prayers, to be said in her honour; but there is the following limitation: 'We only allow the celebration of the Mass and recitation of the Office on the 17th October, in the diocese of Autun, and in all the churches throughout the world belonging to those houses in which the religious Order of the Nuns of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is found instituted.'

The faithful throughout the Church are allowed, therefore, to believe that all those who have been beatified are enjoying the Beatific Vision, and consequently to ask for their impetration before the throne of God; although the permission to honour them with the especial modes of religious homage above mentioned is restricted to certain persons and places.

When the Supreme Pontiff decides upon a Beatification after a formal examination of the person's virtues and miracles, judicially conducted, the Beatification itself is called *formal*, and partakes more of the character of a judgment than a permission, although the technical language used in the decree is always that of concession, such as 'we permit,' 'we indulge,' 'we grant.'

When, however, the Supreme Pontiff accepts

was sanctioned, the Beatification case called *equipollent*. It is not cause the question has not been throughout by Pontifical authority formal and judicial way; but suit, so far as the recognised person beatified person in regard to it concerned, is practically the same mode of Beatification is called *æq*, distinguishing precisely between the latter, compared with the former said to partake more of the character of concession than of a judgment; capable of revocation, this right is reserved to the Congregation in clause.

We need scarcely remark that

the Beatified is solemnly and definitively enrolled in the *canon* or catalogue of the Saints reigning with Christ. In Beatification, as we have seen, certain special acts of worship are permitted, but also generally restricted to portions of the Universal Church; but in Canonisation there is an explicit, ultimate, and universally obligatory sentence, by which the entire body of the faithful is not allowed only, but is *bound* to believe that the person canonised is in heaven, and deserves to receive the public veneration and religious honours due to the Saints in the whole Church Militant upon earth. In Canonisation, the declaratory words 'we define,' 'we decree,' 'we command,' mark the difference between it and Beatification; the former act is also celebrated with more august pomp than the latter.

Hence Beatification is an inchoate, preparatory, and implicit sentence; or, as some theologians have termed it, a '*particular canonisation*;' whilst that expressly definitive and pronounciative form by which all Catholics are certified that a person reigns in celestial glory is Canonisation.

As the only additional examination required for Canonisation is that of miracles wrought through the intercession of the Servant of God between the Beatification and

essential.



CHAPTER X.

DECREE OF THE BEATIFICATION OF MARGARET MARY ALACOQUE.

THE following is a translation of the Decree by which the Servant of God was raised from the rank of Venerable to that of Blessed :

PIUS IX. POPE.

For the perpetual memory of the thing.

Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, Who, led by His exceeding charity, having taken upon Himself the weakness of our mortal nature, offered Himself unspotted unto God upon the altar of the Cross, in order to free us from the most hateful slavery of sin, desired nothing so much as to enkindle, by every means, in the souls of men, that charity with which His Heart was consumed, as we know from the Gospel He declared to His disciples, 'I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?'

In order the more to enkindle this fire of charity, He willed that the adoration and worship of His most Sacred Heart should be

pierced and wounded with the
that our souls might find there
hiding-place as it were, and se
to which we might betake oursel
from the attacks and snares of
Who is not invited to treat with
love and honour that most Sacre
the Wound of Which flowed for
blood, the very fountain of our li
tion?

In order to establish and sp
wide amongst mankind this devo
tary, and also so justly due t
Saviour vouchsafed to choose Hi
Venerable Margaret Mary de
Religious of the Order of the Vis
Blessed Virgin Mary, who by the
her life and the constant practice

tokens, a presage of what she would be in after life. When still quite a child, she showed a distaste for all the little gratifications which are so commonly attractive to children, and repaired to the more retired rooms of the house, where she might with her whole soul worship and adore God. As she grew older, she shunned the company of others, and delighted in nothing so much as in constantly visiting churches, and there prolonging her prayers for several hours. She consecrated her virginity to God from her tender years, and began to afflict her body with fasts, disciplines, and other austerities, that she might thus hedge in, as it were, with thorns, and guard, the flower of her virginity.

She presented also a striking example of meekness and humility. For, when her father was dead, and her mother worn out by age and severe sickness, she was treated with such harshness and severity by those who had care of the house, as often to want even what was necessary for food and clothing. Yet she bore meekly this cruelty and injustice for several years, setting before her eyes the example of the sufferings of Christ.

When she was nine years of age she approached the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist for the first time, and drew from this hea-

neighbour, she deeply grieved at t
of so many children, who were a
doned by their parents, and were
in vice and ignorance of what re
eternal salvation ; she accordin
them with much patience in the
faith, trained them to virtue, an
wont to deprive herself of a consi
tion of her daily sustenance to fee

Having chosen for herself a Heav
she steadfastly refused her mother'
hand of a person of wealth and
and the better to insure her fid
she had pledged to her Heavenly
thought of entering an Order o
Nuns. After having weighed the
and seriously with herself, and c

tokened, she deserved to be admitted to pronounce her solemn vows. After pronouncing them, she appeared now to press forward with redoubled speed towards the perfection of religious life, so bright a pattern of all virtues did she exhibit to her Sisters in religion. There shone forth in her a wonderful humility, an extraordinary readiness in obeying, and patience in enduring troubles of every kind, a most exact observance of even the least rules, and a constant severity in afflicting her body; moreover, whilst she devoted herself day and night to continuous prayer, being often rapt in ecstasy, the gifts of divine grace were most plenteously showered upon her. In meditating on the sufferings of Christ our Lord, she was penetrated with sentiments of such deep compassion, and inflamed with so ardent a love, that she commonly appeared as if languishing in a swoon, and scarcely alive.

In course of time, when by her distinguished virtue she had gained the admiration of all her Sisters, she was placed over the young persons who were engaged in their noviceship, that she might train and form them to religious life; and for this office no one could have been found better suited than the Venerable Margaret Mary, since by her own example she animated and encouraged the

than usual fervour before the sacrament of the Eucharist, that Christ intimated to her that it would be owing to Him if the worship of His Heart, burning with love for mankind, was established, and that He wished of this to be consigned to her.] of the Venerable Servant of God alarmed, as she deemed herself unworthy of such an office; nevertheless, to comply with the will of Heaven and her desire of enkindling divine hearts of men, she earnestly exerted herself both amongst the Religious of her convent, and also, as far as she could, amongst all persons in general, to induce them to show every mark of honour, veneration towards that seat of di-

such labour and perseverance to promote this devotion, that by the favour of divine grace it has increased and spread far and wide throughout the Church, with great fruit to souls.

At length, desiring to be dissolved, that she might take flight to the heavenly nuptials of the Lamb, for which she so earnestly sighed, and wasted, not so much by disease as by the fire of charity, she departed this life on the 17th of October in the year 1690.

The opinion which had prevailed of the Venerable Margaret Mary's sanctity became more general after her death, especially when confirmed by repeated miracles which were reported to have been wrought through the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God. In consequence, in the year 1715, the Bishop of Autun lost no time in procuring documents relating to her life and virtues, to be drawn up in the usual form. But the serious political disturbances which shook nearly the whole of Europe at the close of the eighteenth century prevented the cause from being carried before the Holy See. As soon, however, as the furious civil tempest was calmed, petition for the decision of the Apostolic See was made, and an inquiry instituted into the virtues by which the Venerable

had been long and carefully weighed, and at length declared by a Decree, on the 23d of August in the year 1790, that they had reached an heroic degree of sanctity.

Afterwards in the assembly of the 10th of April, a discussion was proposed concerning the miracles by which the sanctity of the late Margaret was said to have been attested by Heaven; and when, after a long discussion, they had been apprised of the truth of the same miracles, by the Consultors and the Cardinal, having first implored the aid of the Holy Spirit, pronounced an affirmative sentence, that the truth of the same miracles, was proved on the 10th day of April of the present year.

It only remained that the same should be asked whether it were

June in the same year, that, since it seemed good to Us, the honours of the Blessed, with all the usual privileges, might safely be paid to the Venerable Servant of God until such time as her Canonisation should be solemnised.

We, therefore, moved by the prayers of nearly all the Bishops of France, as also by those of the Religious of the Order of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with the counsel and assent of Our venerable brethren, the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church presiding over the Congregation of Rites, grant permission by Our apostolic authority that the same Venerable Servant of God, Margaret Mary de Alacoque, may be styled in future by the name of Blessed, and that her body and relics may be presented to the veneration of the faithful, but not carried in solemn processions; moreover, by the same Our authority, we grant that the Office and Mass of the Common of Virgins, with proper prayers approved by Us, according to the rubrics of the Roman Missal and Breviary, may be said in her honour. But we only allow the celebration of Mass and recitation of Office on the 17th of October, in the diocese of Autun, and in all the churches throughout the world belonging to those

and regular, who are bound to say
of the Canonical Hours, and, as to
Masses, to all priests that resort to churches
in which the Feast is celebrated. We
grant that within the first year after the
date of these present letters, the solemnity
of the Beatification of the Venerable
of God, Margaret Mary de Alacoque,
celebrated in the dioceses and churches
mentioned with Office and Masses of
rank of a greater double; and We order
the celebration to take place on a day to be
pointed by the Ordinaries, after the
solemnity has been celebrated in the
Basilica, any Apostolical Constitutions,
Ordinations whatsoever, and any other
instruments to the contrary, notwithstanding.
We will moreover, that the same

DECREE OF HER BEATIFICATION. 95

Given at Castel Gandolfo, under the Seal
of the Fisherman, on the 29th day of the
month of August in the year 1864, the nine-
teenth year of Our Pontificate.

N. CARD. PARACCIANI CLARELLI.

THE END.

LONDON:
ROBSON AND SONS, PRINTERS, FANCY LANE, E.C.







